Vishwakarman, Indra And Trisiras

Viswakarman, the architect of Gods, is a Brahmana. One day, out of sheer arrogance, Indra insults Vishwakarman who then walks out of his heavenly court in a huff. Vishwakarman knows that Indra often gets carried away by the material opulence and the beauty of the Apsaras who fawn over him in Swarga.

So Vishwakarman decides to teach Indra a lesson. He creates a son using his cosmic genius and yogic powers and names him Trisiraska Viswarupa. Trisiras has three beautiful heads. He reads the Vedas with his first head, eats and drinks Amrita with the second and studies the universe with his third head for several years. He then performs a tapasya to get the blessings of Devi Bhagavati.

After a few years, Trisiras performs the PanchAgni sadhana in the searing heat of the summer. He lights four fires around him and the fifth source of Agni is the sun’s radiance. Trisiras then stops eating and drinking, suspends himself by his feet from a tree, breathes only once every now and then. Soon, his entire body starts shining radiantly and the fire of his tapasya scorches the subtle energies of the three lokas.

Indra is alarmed. His guru had prophesied that Vishwakarman’s son will oust him from Swarga and take away his powers one day. So Indra decides to ruin Trisiras’ tapasya. He sends several seasoned apsaras like Urvashi, Menaka, Rambha, Ghritachi and Tilottama to seduce Trisiras. But they all return to Indra and say, “Never before were our advances ignored so completely. Trisiras’ entire body is on fire. Surely he is an incarnation of

Agni. He would have burnt us to ashes if he had opened his eyes even briefly. Be careful O Indra – for this is no ordinary tapasvi.”

Indra is scared. Very scared. He wants to preserve his power, position and wealth. At all costs. But Indra’s ego and arrogance blind him to his own fears and insecurity. He decides to put Vishwakarman in his rightful place.

Indra mounts Airavata, picks up his Vajra, the thunderbolt with a thousand joints and flies through the skies. He reaches the spot where Trisiras is performing his PanchAgni tapasya. For a brief moment, just a brief moment - Indra hesitates. He looks within and says, “I am about to commit the sin of Brahmahatya. Trisiras has not harmed me in any way. Why then am I so intent on killing him?” Indra looks at Trisiras. He has the most serene expression on his face. His entire body is glowing with the tejas of his tapasya.

Yet the very next instant Indra’s fears and insecurity make him panicky. He says, “Trisiras’ tapasya is not yet complete. Who knows what kind of boon he will ask from Devi Bhagawati when she appears before him? Why should I be kind to Trisiras? He is Vishwakarman’s son, the man who vowed to destroy me before he left my court. And the prophecy too says that Vishwakarman’s son will dethrone me. No, my emotions are clouding the clarity of my thoughts. It is my duty to protect myself first.”

So Indra ignores the voice of his conscience, picks up his Vajra, utters an occult mantra and casts the weapon squarely at

Trisiras' chest. Trisiras is so deeply engrossed in his tapasya that not even the slightest sound emerges from his lips. He does not even open his eyes. Trisiras just keels over and falls down. Dead.

Indra cries out triumphantly. But the other devas are aghast. Indra had committed the worst of crimes – Brahmahatya – he had killed a muni while he was performing his tapasya. And they all chorus, "Indra, we too will have to pay for this sin of yours."

But Indra ignores them all. A few days later, the insecure Indra feels restless. He returns to the scene of the crime and is awestruck when he sees a strange light radiating from Trisiras' body even now. Indra's fears return manifold to him again. He feels Trisiras is not yet completely dead. He knows his Vajra can never fail him. But the scene in front of his eyes tells a different tale.

Just then, Indra spots a woodcutter called Taksha passing by. Indra stops Taksha and says, "I am Indra. I killed Trisiras with my Vajra. But I think he still has some life within him. I, the lord of the devas, request you to strike off the heads of Trisiras with your axe. I want to be doubly sure that he is truly dead."

Taksha looks at Indra and says, "This man, Trisiras has done me no harm. And why would I commit the sin of cutting off a dead man's heads? He is already dead. He can do you no harm too. And anyway my axe cannot sever a neck which has three heads." Indra looks at Taksha and says, "Trisiras is born to usurp my kingdom. He has to die if I have to survive. I am sure

life still lingers in his body. A dead man wouldn’t have that kind of a strange glow around him.”

Taksha looks at Indra strangely and says, “You have already incurred the sin of Brahmahatya. And tell me, why should I be a party to all this? I doubt if Trisiras has done anyone any harm in his life. Your insecurity is making you behave strangely indeed. Control your fears O Indra. For you are not in your senses anymore.”

Indra looks at Taksha vainly and says, “I will deal with the repercussions of Brahmahatya when I have to. I promise you this. If you chop this man’s heads off from his body, I will offer you a portion of all the sacrificial offerings that the devas get from every yagna.”

Taksha realizes that he can do nothing to make Indra see reason. And he knows that only the truly blessed get the sacrificial offerings of yagnas. So without any further hesitation, he climbs on Trisira’s chest. And with three mighty strokes of his axe, he lops off Trisiras’ three heads.

Now Indra and Taksha witness the strangest sight of their lives. For thousands and thousands of Kapinjala birds fly out of Trisiras’ head that chanted the Vedas. Hordes of Tittiris fly out of the head that gazed at the universe and flocks and flocks of Kalavinkas emerge out of the head that drank the Amrita. These birds cover the sky with their bodies and sing sweet songs for a long while. They then disperse from sight.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Indra finally returns to Amravati. Taksha is also quite pleased with himself because he knows he will now have access to divine gifts. When Vishwakarman hears about how Indra killed his gentle son Trisiras with such ruthlessness, he swears to create another son, Vritasura to avenge the death of his gentle Trisiras. And it is Vritasura who finally fulfils the prophecy of dethroning Indra.

The insight is crystal clear. Our fears and our insecurity often overwhelm us. But usually, we are not aware of this. We have to recognize our fears and insecurities. Even this is not easy. We then have to use our awareness and consciously work on them. Only then can we look at them realistically - in the right dimensions and overcome them – slowly – for this too is a process.

This is worth the effort. For if we fail to do so, like Indra, we will end up living through our fears – and will create the very situation that we wanted to avoid at all costs in our lives.